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Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its 2009 first regular session

(4-6 February 2009)*

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Contents

			Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	**Organization of the session**		1-5	3
	A.	Election of officers	1	3
	B.	Opening statements	2–3	3
	C.	Adoption of the agenda	4-5	3
II.	**Deliberations of the Executive Board**		6-81	4
	A.	Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council	6-22	4
	B.	Follow-up to the evaluation of gender policy implementation	23-30	7
	C.	UNICEF programme cooperation	31-37	8
	D.	UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the biennium ended 31 December 2007 and Report of the Board of Auditors	38-41	9
	E.	Private Fundraising: 2009 work plan and proposed budget	42-48	10
	F.	Pledging event	49-52	11
	G.	Update on the organizational improvement initiatives in UNICEF	53-60	12
	H.	Other matters	61-71	13
	I.	Adoption of draft decisions	72	15
	J.	Closing statements by the Executive Director and the President	73-81	15
Annex	**Decisions adopted by the Executive Board**			17

Organization of the session

A. Election of officers

1. The Executive Board elected as President H. E. Mr. Oumar Daou, Permanent Representative of Mali to the United Nations; and as Vice-Presidents H. E. Ms. Ismat Jahan, Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations; H. E. Mr. Léo Mérorès, Permanent Representative of Haiti to the United Nations; H. E. Ms. Simona Miculescu, Permanent Representative of Romania to the United Nations; and Mr. Takeshi Osuga, Minister, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations.

B. Opening statements

2. The President of the Executive Board for 2008, H. E. Mr. Anders Lidén, delivered a farewell statement, thanking the Executive Board and observers, the Executive Director and the secretariat for their excellent cooperation during the year. He gave special praise to UNICEF staff in the field for their knowledge and experience. His statement was followed by the opening remarks of the incoming President, who said that the Presidency of the Executive Board was an honour for him personally and for the African Group of States. He noted that this was a time of many challenges, including the multi-faceted economic, food, energy and environmental crises, which particularly impacted low-income countries. In the face of these challenges, it was crucial to protect the rights, health and well-being of children.

3. The Executive Director, in her opening remarks, emphasized the need for UNICEF to maintain transparency and accountability in its operations in order to promote an environment of trust. Stressing the heavy toll the financial crisis was taking on children, she underscored the importance of promoting food and nutrition security and of continued investment in social structures and social services. She noted that only seven years remained to meet the Millennium Development Goals and cited significant progress made by UNICEF and its partners towards several goals and targets. UNICEF was intensifying work with partners in several areas, notably in producing evidence and data on results; using new technology to advance development; promoting food and nutrition security, including through ready-to-use therapeutic foods; protecting the rights of children in emergencies; and halting the trafficking of children. This was followed by a short video on the work of UNICEF in 2008.

C. Adoption of the agenda

4. The Executive Board adopted the agenda, timetable and organization of work (E/ICEF/2009/1) for the session.

5. In accordance with rule 50.2 of the rules of procedure, the Secretary of the Executive Board announced that credentials had been submitted by 43 observer delegations, including 2 United Nations bodies, 2 intergovernmental organizations and 3 non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

II. Deliberations of the Executive Board

A. Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council

6. The Annual Report to the Economic and Social Council for 2008 (E/ICEF/2009/3) was introduced by the Director of Governance, United Nations and Multilateral Affairs, who also presented the document on reports of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) of relevance to UNICEF (E/ICEF/2009/6) included under this agenda item.

7. The Director explained that the annual report focused on how UNICEF, in the context of General Assembly resolution 62/208 on the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, works with Governments, United Nations systems, NGOs and other partners to address the rights and well-being of children. A significant portion of the report focused on improvements in the functioning of the United Nations development system. In this regard, an important initiative of UNICEF in 2008 was the development of an Action Plan on the TCPR, an organization-wide effort, which would be closely monitored.

8. Regarding resources, the Director noted that the increase of 12 per cent in UNICEF income over 2007 was higher than the 2.6 per cent increase anticipated in the report. Nevertheless, there was continuing concern over the low proportion of regular resources to total resources and the potential impact of the financial crisis on the income and expenditure of UNICEF. To monitor the effects of the crisis on children and women, UNICEF would emphasize the collection and use of disaggregated data, among other measures. Among the other issues highlighted by the Director were efforts to promote capacity development to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of operations; improvements in South-South cooperation; and the importance of gender equality and mainstreaming.

9. Numerous delegations expressed their appreciation for the TCPR action plan, with several expressing hope that other agencies would follow the lead of UNICEF. Speakers underlined the importance of the comprehensive policy review process (including the quadrennial comprehensive review, or QCPR) and the commitment to United Nations system-wide coherence, especially the harmonization of business practices. This process, it was noted, will help the United Nations to achieve effectiveness, efficiency, coordination and coherence in its operations. One speaker requested UNICEF to share with the Executive Board lessons learned and challenges in implementing the comprehensive policy review. As a means to bring about greater coherence, several speakers stressed the importance of "delivering as one" and recommended monitoring and sharing the experiences of pilot countries. One speaker requested UNICEF to prepare a report on the strengths and weaknesses of "delivering as one". Another speaker emphasized that Governments must play a leading role in the initiative.

10. UNICEF was commended for its work with other agencies in furthering United Nations reform and coherence, including in implementing the Accra Agenda for Action and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As the annual report indicated, UNICEF had increased its role in humanitarian partnership consultations, information and communication technology, the Development Operations Coordination Office and the Chief Executives Board. More work was needed, however, in

creating joint funding arrangements with other agencies. One delegation requested additional information on how UNICEF is implementing the Accra Agenda, especially regarding budget funding and work in sector-wide approaches. UNICEF was also requested to provide more information on its support for poverty reduction strategy papers and, in connection with inter-agency collaboration, on measures adopted to intensify collaboration with regional commissions. Several delegations stressed the importance of alignment with national plans and priorities and the use of national systems. Other suggestions were made to continue strengthening the resident coordinator system.

11. A number of delegations indicated their concern over the potential impact of the financial crisis on the flow of resources to the development operations of the United Nations. They underscored the need for an increase in contributions to regular, or core, resources of UNICEF, which had decreased over the years as a proportion of total resources. It was suggested UNICEF further devise strategies for flexible and predictable funding, including thematic funding, which are essential elements in implementing the TCPR. Also crucial were joint funding arrangements with United Nations agencies and contributions from the private sector. In addition to effects on income, UNICEF needed to pay special attention to the dire consequences of the food, climate and financial crisis on the most vulnerable populations, including children, women and people living in extreme poverty.

12. In the face of such crises, including environmental challenges, UNICEF was encouraged to emphasize women's participation in decision-making as part of its overall support for gender equality and mainstreaming.

13. In addition to focusing on the regions of Asia and Africa, especially to accelerate progress in maternal and newborn health, UNICEF was encouraged to work more closely with middle-income countries in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, in reducing poverty and in eliminating disparities. It was noted that partnerships are key to advancing progress on these goals and those of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan. Citing the importance of partnerships, several delegations commended the contribution of UNICEF to South-South, North-South and 'triangular' cooperation. This was especially noteworthy in the transfer of new and emerging technologies. Such cooperation had helped many programme countries, especially those in Africa, access best practices and lessons learned. Requests were made for more information on South-South cooperation and the results achieved, and on partnership-building to facilitate the sharing of technology benefiting children.

14. Knowledge-sharing and use of new and emerging technologies were also cited as important elements of national capacity-building and the promotion of national ownership of programmes. Delegations particularly welcomed the capacity-building efforts of UNICEF in the areas of data, knowledge-management, the provision of social services, and the promotion of maternal and newborn health and child nutrition, including the production and use of ready-to-use therapeutic foods.

15. Delegations underscored the crucial role UNICEF plays in humanitarian operations, including in the transition from crisis to recovery and development. UNICEF was encouraged to further support peace-building efforts and to report on best practices and lessons learned in the context of the cluster

initiative, particularly in child protection, and water, sanitation and hygiene. Progress made in enhancing the partnership with the World Bank was promising.

16. Several delegations noted the importance of monitoring and evaluation in improving policy and programmes. This effort would include strengthening the collection and use of reliable data and refining Key Performance Indicators and their analysis. In this connection, delegations also cited the need for more effective reporting back to the Executive Board. In particular, UNICEF was requested to further improve the format and analytical content of the annual report to the Economic and Social Council. Several speakers suggested that the report follow more closely the structure and sequence of the TCPR resolution of December 2007, and the management implementation plan set out in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2008/49) and taken note of by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 2008/2 in July 2008. In addition, the report should provide a more qualitative assessment and analysis of results achieved, lessons learned, and implementation of the TCPR resolution.

17. The delegation of Ireland requested a regular update on the work of UNICEF in fulfilling commitments made at the 4th Global Partners Forum on children affected by HIV/AIDS, which was hosted by the Government of Ireland and UNICEF in October 2008.

18. In response to delegations' comments on the importance of reform of United Nations operative activities, the Director noted that UNICEF had taken several actions, including the following: creating the new UNICEF division of Governance, United Nations and Multilateral Affairs; supporting, monitoring and compiling lessons learned from the pilots; actively engaging in coherence issues of the Chief Executives Board and its three high-level committees; and contributing to the harmonization of business practices among United Nations organizations. UNICEF also participated in sector-wide approaches and arrangements for pooled sector funds.

19. The Executive Director reinforced these remarks by emphasizing that UNICEF was strongly committed to greater coherence in the United Nations system, especially in support of achieving the Millennium Development Goals. She stressed the importance of capacity-building in several areas: in data and statistics; in supply operations; and in legal frameworks to protect the rights of children, women and others. UNICEF was also giving priority to working with Africa and Asia on achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and to working with middle-income countries on child protection and other issues. She underlined the importance of work with Governments and other partners in emergency preparedness and children affected by armed conflict; and the need to focus on gender to break the cycle of poverty.

20. Following her comments on the annual report, the Director presented the reports of the JIU of relevance to UNICEF, highlighting the improved dialogue with the JIU and follow-up on the recommendations made by the inspectors. She noted that, in 2008, UNICEF had responded to 21 JIU requests and was proactive in strengthening coordination among member organizations and United Nations agencies to ensure consistency and coherence in the response to JIU reports. Several delegations commended the JIU process and the efforts of UNICEF to apply the recommendations of the reports.

21. The annual report will be submitted, together with a summary of comments made during the discussion, to the Economic and Social Council for consideration at its 2009 substantive session.

22. The Executive Board adopted decision 2009/2 (see annex).

B. Follow-up to the evaluation of gender policy implementation

23. The Executive Board had before it the Follow-up to the Evaluation of Gender Policy Implementation (E/ICEF/2009/4), which was introduced by the Director of Policy and Practice and presented by the Principal Adviser, Gender.

24. Delegations commended UNICEF for its work in responding to the recommendations of the Evaluation of Gender Policy Implementation in UNICEF and welcomed reporting on progress as a regular agenda item. While the one-year action plan on follow-up on the evaluation recommendations was appreciated, some delegations called for a greater sense of urgency in UNICEF efforts, and pointed to the need for clear, strategic direction. They recommended a medium-term plan, underpinned by a revised gender policy that included a roadmap and timeframe to ensure the achievement of results. It was further recommended that this be supported with an increase in both human and financial resources. Several delegations also highlighted the need for strong, dedicated leadership in relation to the organization's work on mainstreaming gender, with senior management ensuring progress in this area.

25. Regarding updating the gender policy, delegations stressed the importance of broad consultation as part of the process, including with Executive Board Members, United Nations agencies, and civil society, and wide dissemination within the organization upon adoption of the policy to ensure ownership and implementation. One delegation emphasized the need to integrate sexual and reproductive health and rights and sex education in the policy and UNICEF-supported programmes.

26. Several delegations praised the work of UNICEF in articulating linkages between the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women as a useful resource, including for other United Nations agencies and humanitarian organizations. The e-learning gender course was also noted as a particularly valuable initiative. Specific questions were raised on the extent of UNICEF collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on integrating gender in humanitarian programming and with respect to guidance at the country level on the role of UNICEF in reporting on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

27. The Executive Director affirmed the commitment of UNICEF to gender equality, stressing that the cycle of poverty cannot be broken without addressing gender inequalities, and in particular, the needs and rights of adolescent girls. She noted that gender concerns are integrated into every aspect of the work of UNICEF, including in maternal and child health; addressing barriers to girls' education; promoting reproductive health education as a means to prevent HIV/AIDS; using a rights-based approach to empower girls and women so that they are less vulnerable to abuse and sexual

exploitation and more able to achieve financial independence; and advocating for improved national mechanisms to protect girls from violence and child marriage. She pointed to the lack of sex-disaggregated data as a particular impediment to be addressed.

28. The Principal Adviser, Gender, noted that the one-year action plan to follow-up on the Gender Evaluation was developed as a result of a year-long consultative process with senior management across the organization, and as indicated in paragraph 7 of document E/ICEF/2009/4, this action plan will be followed by a multi-layered plan and results-based monitoring framework to be produced in 2009. In response to questions raised, she also outlined several instances of collaboration with UNHCR, including through the sub-group on gender in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Task Force on Humanitarian Action, of which both organizations are a part, as well as joint initiatives to promote equitable humanitarian assistance and integrate gender in humanitarian programming. With respect to greater clarity on the role of UNICEF in reporting on the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, she mentioned that a guide had been produced in several languages to assist country offices and United Nations country teams in supporting the reporting process.

29. The Director of Policy and Practice concurred with recommendations to use a results-based approach in the organization's follow-up to the Gender Evaluation and pointed to the strengthening of key results indicators in the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan from a gender perspective as an important step in this direction. Regarding calls for increased human resources capacity, he mentioned that staffing and related budgets were being considered for the next biennium along with other options, such as partnering with external institutions and experts.

30. The Executive Board adopted decision 2009/3 (see annex).

C. UNICEF programme cooperation

Approval of revised country programme documents (CPDs)

31. The President stated that, in accordance with decisions 2002/4 and 2006/19, the Executive Board had commented on the draft CPDs and had approved the aggregate indicative budgets for six country programmes at the second regular session of 2008. The draft CPDs were then revised, taking into account, as appropriate, comments made by delegations during that session, and were posted, along with the summary results matrices, on the UNICEF website within six weeks of the discussion of the drafts at the second regular session. The revised CPDs were to be approved by the Executive Board at the current session on a no-objection basis, unless five members had informed the secretariat in writing of their wish to bring any country programme before the Executive Board. The secretariat had not received any such requests, and therefore, the country programmes were approved for Angola, Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti, Kenya, Timor-Leste and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.

Recommendation for additional regular resources for approved country programmes

32. The recommendation (E/ICEF/2009/P/L.1) was introduced by the Director, Programme Division.

33. The representative of Kenya emphasized that it was important not to cut back on programmes during the crisis involving finance, food, energy and climate change. Kenya was one of the countries in Africa that would not be able to achieve many of the targets of the Millennium Development Goals, and failure to achieve the Goals in developing countries would represent a collective failure. The UNICEF-Kenya country programme's close alignment with Kenya's development priorities and plans involved a scaling-up of programming and resource allocation and was partly responsible for the recent sustained growth in Kenya.

34. The representative of Côte d'Ivoire said that UNICEF-assisted programmes in his country had helped the Government make significant progress in assisting children affected by armed conflict. Following the 2007 peace agreements, UNICEF will participate in peace-building initiatives and development activities. The Government welcomes UNICEF assistance in supporting poverty reduction and other activities and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

35. The representative of Afghanistan noted that the UNICEF initiative to synchronize the strategic planning cycle with the national development strategy was a pragmatic approach to creating an environment ensuring the rights to development, protection and participation for children and women. She urged development partners to assure that UNICEF and other United Nations agencies had the financial and logistical ability to assist the Government with challenges of security, the food crisis, and promoting the health of the most vulnerable, especially in reducing child mortality and improving maternal health. Her Government recommended that additional funding be allocated to education and gender equality, health, and nutrition, particularly school nutrition programmes.

36. The representative of Chile noted that UNICEF enjoyed a very high technical and professional credibility in his country. While Chile required support from external partners to make progress on a rights-based focus on children's needs, achievements in reduction of infant mortality, improved nutrition and early childhood education had made Chile a best-practice model in the design and implementation of child and family policies. Her Government was concerned that the graduation system could lead to a loss of regular resources for middle-income countries and stressed the importance of continued UNICEF programme cooperation in Chile.

37. The Executive Board approved the recommendation in decision 2009/1 (see annex).

D. UNICEF financial report and audited financial statements for the biennium ended 31 December 2007 and Report of the Board of Auditors

38. The report (A/63/5/Add.2 and Corr.1) was introduced by the Comptroller. Delegations welcomed the unqualified opinion of the Board of Auditors on the UNICEF financial statements and expressed appreciation for the progress made by UNICEF in the implementation of the

recommendations. Appreciation was also expressed for the specific efforts made by management to improve transparency and to promote managerial accountability and ownership in dealing with audit recommendations. Speakers singled out several priority issues, especially the need to focus on compliance, and the importance of harmonizing efforts with other United Nations agencies on the adoption of International Public Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS). Requests were made for more information on organizational risks, UNICEF cash balances and year-end unexpended funds, and the potential impact of the financial crisis and currency fluctuations on UNICEF income and expenditure in the coming years.

39. The Comptroller explained that actions have been taken to strengthen management and monitoring of financial resources during 2008, and that further improvements were expected when IPSAS was fully implemented and the single Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system rolled out to field offices. He took note of the concern regarding the cash balance in regular resources and clarified that 50 per cent of the regular resources cash balance represented working capital that served as a 'cushion' to protect UNICEF liquidity, and that the balance would be allocated for programme activities. He also explained that an internal review had been conducted to assess the potential impact of the global financial crisis and that the upcoming biennium budget included an alternative scenario for future expenditure levels in case forecasts indicated that income would decrease significantly. Finally, he noted that IPSAS implementation was on track, with the goal of having compliant financial statements by the end of 2010.

40. Mr. Hu Xue, a member of the Board of Auditors, was also available to answer any questions from delegations on the report. He took note of the views and recommendations of the delegations.

41. The Executive Board adopted decision 2009/4 (see annex).

E. Private Fundraising: 2009 work plan and proposed budget

42. The Director of Private Fundraising and Partnerships (PFP) presented the report (E.ICEF/2009/AB/L.1 and Corr.1 and Corr.2). Several delegations praised the Director and his team for continued work during the restructuring of the division last year.

43. Questions were raised over the potential impact of the economic crisis on the 2009 private sector income. The need to monitor the impact of the crisis on the private sector fundraising as well as to strengthen partnerships with the National Committees for UNICEF was emphasized. One speaker expressed concern over the level of expenditure vis-à-vis income projections, while another noted the decrease of investment funds allocation in the 2009 budget. The importance of deepening private sector engagement and advocacy in the industrialized countries was underscored.

44. Several delegations welcomed the initiative on the new partnership business model in Cards and Gifts. It was acknowledged that it was still too early to see its impact on income and expenditures. In light of the decreasing sales of Cards and Gifts, a question was raised on how the new model was being implemented. A specific request was made to UNICEF to share information on the income and expenditure of the gifts category of the business. One delegation encouraged consultations with the

National Committees and hoped that the contribution rate of the National Committees would be maintained.

45. The Director responded that PFP, together with the National Committees, would intensify the monitoring of indicators to assess the impact of economic developments on income, and that efforts would be made to maintain the high rate of the National Committee's contribution rate. The 2009 income projection was conservative. PFP understood the need to extend channels for private fundraising, including in the non-traditional markets, as well as for contingency planning. The Director also highlighted the role of the new Corporate Social Responsibility unit in further developing private sector engagement.

46. The Director recognized the issues raised regarding the Cards and Gifts business. He said that PFP staff and the National Committees had participated in the development of the new business model, and that all necessary actions had been taken to improve cost/income ratios. Deputy Executive Director Hilde Frafjord Johnson added that the Executive Board members had been informed on the progress of the Cards and Gifts strategic review implementation through informal consultations.

47. The Chairperson of the Standing Group of National Committees for UNICEF summarized the recent activities of the National Committees, including in advocacy and resource mobilization.

48. The Executive Board adopted decision 2009/6 (see annex).

F. Pledging event

49. The Executive Director opened the tenth pledging conference, welcoming the participants to the event and expressing her appreciation for the participation and support that the Governments, National Committees for UNICEF and the private sector had continued to provide to UNICEF. She noted that the ability of UNICEF to work effectively with national Governments and other partners depended on the contributions of donors. The Executive Director also stated that the overall Government contributions to UNICEF had increased from $725 million in 2000 to more than $2 billion in 2008. Preliminary figures showed that for regular resources, UNICEF had received $616 million from donor Governments in 2008, compared to $538 million in 2007.

50. Including pledges received during the United Nations Pledging Conference in November 2008, as well as pledges received outside both pledging events, UNICEF had so far received pledges for 2009 regular resources in the amount of $291 million (compared to $384 million in 2008) from 41 Governments. This corresponded to 45 per cent of the 2009 financial medium-term strategic plan target of $642 million.

51. A total of 14 donors increased their pledges in local currency over their 2008 contributions: Belgium, Croatia, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Finland, Iceland, Japan, Luxembourg, Mauritania, Myanmar, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Sweden. There were two returning donors who pledged contributions to regular resources for 2009: Iceland and Malta. Several donors intervened at the pledging event but were not able to indicate the pledge amount due to

their Governments' budgetary approval processes. They committed to informing UNICEF of their contribution in the near future. The representative of Mali announced the Government's intention to make a contribution to UNICEF for 2009. A post-session conference room paper contains details of Government contributions to UNICEF regular resources, pledged or paid for 2008, and indicative figures for 2009.

52. Several delegations expressed their support for the work of UNICEF and commended the organization for its contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals as well as for its participation in the United Nations coherence and harmonization processes. Some speakers stated their concern about the effects that the financial crisis and food price crisis will have on the vulnerable groups. They encouraged UNICEF to undertake specific measures to counter the effects of the crisis, while committing to support UNICEF in this effort by ensuring regular and thematic resources for children and women.

G. Update on the organizational improvement initiatives in UNICEF

53. The Director of Change Management delivered a presentation on the objectives, results achieved to date, and the next steps planned in each of the organizational improvement initiatives in UNICEF. In 2009, he explained, the initiatives were entering the phase of implementation and organization-wide communication; in 2010, roll-out would take place; and in 2011, efforts would be dedicated to mainstreaming, refining and evaluating the changes undertaken.

54. Several delegations applauded the organizational improvement efforts and said they looked forward to seeing the results of the process. Requests were made for more information on plans to roll out the organizational improvements efficiently and effectively and on the proposed creation of a field support and coordination office.

55. Several speakers also expressed interest in the emerging knowledge-management function and inquired about links to an increased research capacity in UNICEF and to the Innocenti Research Centre.

56. A number of delegations requested information on the relationship of the improvement initiatives to the country programme process and cooperation with other United Nations agencies. Questions were raised on how the inputs of government counterparts would be taken into account in developing a lighter common country programme process; whether these partners would also be engaged in the Strategic Moment of Reflection; and how the local context of each UNICEF country programme would be reflected in the work of the Dynamic Programming Approaches initiative. Delegations also expressed interest in progress achieved at the inter-agency level on the simplification of the country programme process and questioned how the individual mandates of United Nations agencies would be reflected. One speaker emphasized that while it was important to have compatible tools such as enterprise resource planning platforms at the inter-agency level, agencies needed to ensure that common work was facilitated through common business practices.

57. In response, the Director of Change Management noted that a detailed work plan was in place to ensure the effective roll-out of the improvement initiatives. Communication and training strategies were being developed to support headquarters offices to implement the improvements. A field reference group had also been created to ensure participation at all levels of the organization in the development and roll-out of the improvements.

58. Regarding the involvement of partners, it was noted that plans were in place to consult with government counterparts and inter-agency partners at the country level on the simplification of the country programme process. The field reference group would play a fundamental role in ensuring these consultations took place. As it was important for UNICEF to first focus on improving its internal business processes, work at the inter-agency level was just beginning. Discussions within the United Nations Development Group were ongoing with regard to the simplification and harmonization of business processes; UNICEF was consulting with the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Population Fund on the development of a performance management scorecard; and the UNICEF country offices in Mozambique and the United Republic of Tanzania were closely collaborating in the organizational improvement process to ensure that their perspectives as "delivering as one" pilot countries were reflected.

59. Regarding the field support and coordination office, Deputy Executive Director Omar Abdi clarified that creation of the office had been postponed pending the review of functions, roles and responsibilities planned under the Accountability Initiative.

60. Deputy Executive Director Saad Houry added that, as the organizational improvement initiatives progressed, individual briefings would be organized with the Executive Board members. Regarding knowledge management and research, UNICEF was already playing a significant role in these areas. For example, the Situation Analysis of children and women was now an outcome of the relationship of UNICEF with government, civil society, United Nations agency and other partners at country level. He stressed that the goal of lightening the country programme process was to help UNICEF to better adapt to each country context. He also clarified that the Strategic Moment of Reflection would not change the consultation process with government and national partners on the development of the country programme but rather would strengthen it by including greater global strategic and technical inputs from headquarters.

H. Other matters

Update on the UNICEF humanitarian response in Gaza

61. The Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa region presented an update on the UNICEF humanitarian response in Gaza, emphasizing the devastating effects on children on both sides of the border. Some 430 children had lost their lives in recent weeks, and more than 1,870 had been injured, with the exact toll to be determined. She explained that UNICEF was working with inter-agency and many other partners, concentrating its efforts in education, water and sanitation and health. Protection, especially psychosocial protection, was a key component of the response. In the

inter-agency flash appeal for Gaza, launched 2 February 2009, UNICEF had requested $34.5 million for activities in support of Gaza children and families.

62. The delegation of the Permanent Observer Mission of Palestine to the United Nations expressed appreciation to UNICEF and the other United Nations agencies for their outstanding work in Gaza and called for greater protection of children. Resources and support were urgently needed for two phases of immediate humanitarian assistance and reconstruction.

63. Delegations welcomed the response of UNICEF and called for continued assistance. A number of speakers underlined the need for unimpeded humanitarian access to those affected by the crisis, with several calling for a lifting of the blockade. Two speakers said that international laws needed to be strengthened. One delegation, expressing concern that the crisis would further limit progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, said a long-term recovery plan was needed and recommended that progress in assisting children and families be reported on in future Executive Board sessions. Another delegation praised the challenging work of UNICEF in psychosocial rehabilitation of children and requested information on the benchmarks of success in this area.

The UNICEF Accountability System

64. Deputy Executive Director Omar Abdi updated the Executive Board on the status of the accountability initiative of UNICEF, stressing the importance of transparency and accountability for the credibility of the UNICEF. The accountability system encompassed the various policies, processes and tools that make up the ethical, oversight and accountability framework of the organization.

65. The delegations that took the floor underlined the importance of having a strong accountability system in place. Some delegations expressed disappointment that a decision had not been taken on accountability in this session of the Executive Board. While several delegations supported discussing and taking a decision on the accountability system at the annual session of the Executive Board in June 2009, others said such a discussion could be constrained by the brief timeline between February and June. Several speakers said they were encouraged by the ongoing dialogue on the issue, with some stressing that it should not become politicized.

66. Several speakers endorsed the idea of having uniform language across agencies on procedures for the disclosure of internal audit reports, particularly as this would support wider coherence efforts; other speakers said that differences among agencies made common language and procedures inappropriate.

67. Delegations emphasized the need to treat the disclosure of internal audit reports with prudence, and the importance of following procedure carefully — both in spirit and letter — in order to avoid any misunderstandings and build trust and confidence in the process.

68. The President of the Executive Board concluded the discussion with agreement to continue negotiations on the accountability system and expressed his intention to appoint a facilitator.

Extension of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan (MTSP)

69. Deputy Executive Director Saad Houry gave a brief presentation on the proposal to extend the UNICEF MTSP until the end of 2013. This measure would be in accordance with General Assembly resolution 63/232 of 19 December 2008, on operational activities for development of the United Nations system. This resolution urged the United Nations funds and programmes to make the necessary changes to align their planning cycles with the comprehensive policy review, the next of which will take place in 2012.

70. The Executive Board adopted decision 2009/5 (see annex).

Update on the implementation of the International Public Sector Accounting Standards

71. An update on the implementation of IPSAS was presented by the Deputy Director of the Division of Financial and Administrative Management/Accounts Section, who provided an overview of what IPSAS means for UNICEF, a summary of progress to date, and key messages about IPSAS adoption by UNICEF. One delegation affirmed support for the project, acknowledging the challenges and underscoring the greater management efficiencies that would result. The delegation expressed interest in meeting bilaterally or multilaterally to understand the implications of IPSAS adoption on external partners, including donors, in part to have a better understanding of how to support the process. Information was also sought on alignment with other funds and programmes as work moves from policy development to implementation.

I. Adoption of draft decisions

72. The Executive Board adopted decisions 2009/1 through 2009/6 (see annex).

J. Closing statements by the Executive Director and the President

73. In her closing remarks, the Executive Director said the very productive discussion of the session had provided UNICEF with good input, and she thanked Executive Board members for the pledges made. This was a critical time for humanitarian and development agencies, given the effect that the financial downturn was likely to have, particularly on the most vulnerable groups. UNICEF and its partners continued to review its impact on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. It was critical to work with partners and utilize available resources more efficiently and encourage donors to maintain their contribution levels.

74. The Executive Director emphasized that UNICEF was committed to transparency and accountability. The organization was striving to be a model of excellence, not only in programming for children but also in management. These efforts included making operations more transparent, particularly in human resources and business practices, as well as in knowledge management and internal communication. In pursuit of this goal, UNICEF had been simplifying its business practices, in part through its 10 Improvement Initiatives. UNICEF was working to create a culture of continuous improvement, especially in the delivery of services. UNICEF was enhancing its collaboration with

partners, including other United Nations system agencies, international organizations, governments and NGOs, especially in achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

75. The Executive Director noted that the session had focused a great deal on evaluation of programmes and on improving data and evidence, especially as means to influence spending in countries and to ensure that aid addressed the biggest gaps and reached the most vulnerable groups.

76. Saying that she appreciated the strong interest shown in the gender evaluation and the follow-up by management, the Executive Director emphasized that she was personally committed to advancing gender equality and to incorporating a gender perspective into UNICEF-supported programmes so that they could be more effective for girls and women. This was especially critical given the importance of gender in breaking the cycle of poverty.

77. The Regional Director's update on the UNICEF humanitarian response in Gaza, she said, underscored the impact of conflict on children and the crucial role of UNICEF situations of conflict and in humanitarian crises, in areas including health, water and sanitation, nutrition, education, protection and psychosocial support.

78. Finally, she paid tribute to Per Engebak, the Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, who was retiring from UNICEF after 33 years of service.

79. The President, in closing, noted that the session had provided a fruitful exchange on important questions at the heart of the UNICEF agenda. Among these questions were country programmes of cooperation, mobilization of financial and budgetary resources, follow-up to the evaluation of gender policy implementation, improvement initiatives and other measures to strengthen accountability in UNICEF, as well as the update on the humanitarian response in Gaza.

80. The essential work of the session, he said, had contributed to the work of UNICEF in meeting the urgent needs of millions of children throughout the world and offering them assistance and protection in all circumstances. He emphasized that the world cannot flourish and live in harmony as long as scourges like infant and maternal mortality, epidemics, illiteracy, hunger and poverty persist, and it was incumbent on all to join forces to meet these challenges. Achieving the Millennium Development Goals was vital in order to improve the living conditions of hundred of millions of children and to ensure growth and sustainable development in poor countries.

81. In the face of difficult economic circumstances, development partners should not give up their commitments of resources and should work together to effect solutions.

Annex

Decisions adopted by the Executive Board at its first regular session of 2009

2009/1 Recommendation for approval of additional regular resources for approved country programmes

The Executive Board

Approves a total of $32,103,455 in regular resources to fund, for 2009, the approved country programmes of the 30 countries listed below, whose regular resources planning levels, based on the modified allocation system and estimated global levels of programmable regular resources, are higher than the levels originally approved by the Executive Board.

Table
Additional regular resources (RR) 2009
(In United States dollars)

Region/country	*Document E/ICEF/*	*Approved programme duration*	*2009 Planning level* (A)	*2009 RR balance* (B)	*Additional RR to be approved* (A-B)
West and Central Africa					
Burkina Faso	2005/P/L.3/Rev.1	2006-2010	15 149 000	13 022 000	2 127 000
Chad	2005/P/L.32/Rev.1	2006-2010	11 317 000	9 587 000	1 730 000
Ghana	2005/P/L.4/Rev.1	2006-2010	8 611 000	7 176 000	1 435 000
Guinea	2006/P/L.9/Rev.1	2007-2011	7 228 000	6 426 000	802 000
Subtotal by region					**6 094 000**
Eastern and Southern Africa					
Botswana	2007/P/L.40	2008-2009	750 000	630 000	120 000
Burundi	2008/P/L.19	2009	9 865 000	7 807 500	2 057 500
Mozambique	2006/P/L.4/Rev.1	2007-2009	16 009 000	13 341 000	2 668 000
Uganda	2005/P/L.2/Rev.1	2006-2010	21 288 000	18 965 000	2 323 000
United Republic of Tanzania	2006/P/L.37/Rev.1	2007-2010	20 748 000	18 267 000	2 481 000

Zambia	2006/P/L.38/Rev.1	2007-2010	8 559 000	8 204 000	355 000
Zimbabwe	2006/P/L.6/Rev.1	2007-2011	4 181 000	4 024 000	157 000
Subtotal by region					**10 161 500**
East Asia and Pacific					
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	2006/P/L.56/Rev.1	2007-2009	1 861 000	1 692 000	169 000
Myanmar	2005/P/L.9/Rev.1	2006-2010	16 717 000	14 795 000	1 922 000
Philippines	2004/P/L.9/Rev.1	2005-2009	3 053 000	2 775 000	278 000
Subtotal by region					**2 369 000**
Central and Eastern Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States					
Armenia	2004/P/L.10/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	644 000	106 000
Bosnia-Herzegovina	2008/P/L.25	2009	750 000	600 000	150 000
Bulgaria	2005/P/L.15/Rev.1	2006-2009	750 000	600 000	150 000
Montenegro	2006/P/L.60/Rev.1	2007-2009	750 000	603 000	147 000
Romania	2004/P/L.15/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	623 000	127 000
Serbia	2004/P/L.16/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	637 000	113 000
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	2004/P/L.18/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	672 945	77 055
Uzbekistan	2004/P/L.20/Rev.1	2005-2009	3 289 000	2 990 000	299 000
Subtotal by region					**1 169 055**
Americas and the Caribbean					
Argentina[1]	2004/P/L.6/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	600 000	150 000
Chile[1]	2004/P/L.6/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	-	750 000
Ecuador	2008/P/L.8	2009	750 000	690 300	59 700
Guatemala	2008/P/L.9	2009	846 000	801 900	44 100
Uruguay[1]	2004/P/L.6/Rev.1	2005-2009	750 000	500 000	250 000
Subtotal by region					**1 253 800**
Middle East and North Africa					
Lebanon	2008/P/L.27	2009	750 000	600 000	150 000
Subtotal by region					**150 000**

[1] As part of the proposal for the Southern Cone countries (E/ICEF/2004/P/L.6/Rev.1): Argentina, Chile and Uruguay.

South Asia					
Afghanistan	2008/P/L.10	2009	39 417 000	30 168 900	9 248 100
Bangladesh	2005/P/L.12/Rev.1	2006-2010	22 482 000	20 824 000	1 658 000
Subtotal by region					**10 906 100**
Total					**32 103 455**

First regular session
6 February 2009

2009/2 Report of the Executive Director of UNICEF to the Economic and Social Council

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note of* the report of the Executive Director of UNICEF to the Economic and Social Council (E/ICEF/2009/3);

2.

3. *Underscores* the importance of the full implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 of 19 December 2007 on the triennial comprehensive policy review (TCPR) of operational activities for development of the United Nations system;

3. *Welcomes* the initiative of UNICEF in preparing the Action Plan for the TCPR, which contains a detailed road map for implementation of General Assembly resolution 62/208 by all UNICEF offices worldwide;

4. *Decides* to transmit the above-mentioned report (E/ICEF/2009/3) to the Economic and Social Council, along with a summary of the comments and guidance provided by delegations at the present session;

5. *Requests* UNICEF to include in future reports a more qualitative assessment and analysis of results achieved, progress made and difficulties encountered, as well as lessons learned;

6. *Requests* that future reports include recommendations to further improve the implementation of resolution 62/208;

7. *Requests* the Executive Director of UNICEF, in consultation with the Administrator of UNDP and the Executive Director of UNFPA, to consider ways to further improve future reports, taking into account relevant resolutions of the Economic and Social Council, including 2008/2, and the need to achieve efficiency and effectiveness in their reporting practices, and to consult with the Executive Board in order to prepare a proposal on this matter at its second regular session 2009.

First regular session
6 February 2009

2009/3 Follow-up to the evaluation of gender policy implementation

The Executive Board

1. *Reaffirms* gender equality as one of the cross-cutting strategies of the medium-term strategic plan of UNICEF;

2. *Takes note* of the Evaluation of Gender Policy Implementation in UNICEF and the management response outlined in the Follow-up to the Evaluation of Gender Policy Implementation (E/ICEF/2009/4), while expressing appreciation for the presentation of a response to all evaluation recommendations;

3. *Welcomes* the strengthening by UNICEF of its gender analysis in the results framework of the medium-term strategic plan, as well as its plan to strengthen capacity in gender equality across all focus areas and in emergency contexts through the establishment of sector-specific guidance, the dissemination of tools and checklists and staff training;

4. *Further welcomes* the creation of a Gender Task Force, representing key divisions and all regional offices, to help guide and monitor the follow-up of UNICEF to the evaluation;

5. *Encourages* ongoing improvements in the establishment of and reporting on gender equality results in programmes, including the integration of sex-disaggregated indicators to support monitoring of implementation;

6. *Urges* continued effort in the area of leadership to improve the integration of gender equality in programming, including in the establishment of institutional and individual accountability mechanisms in programmes, management and human resources systems;

7. *Encourages* UNICEF to clarify resource requirements and sources to achieve greater support and expertise, including at regional and country levels;

8. *Requests* UNICEF to consult the Executive Board when updating the gender equality policy and to clarify expected results for effectiveness and impact;

9. *Requests* UNICEF to measure progress in implementation of the management response and to report on progress annually to the Executive Board beginning at the annual session 2010, while taking into account the provisions of the present decision.

First regular session
6 February 2009

2009/4 UNICEF financial report and the audited financial statements for the biennium ended 31 December 2007 and the report of the Board of Auditors

The Executive Board

1. *Takes note* of the report of the Board of Auditors (A/63/5/Add.2) (A/63/5/Add.2/Corr.1), the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors on the financial statements of the United Nations funds and programmes for the financial period ended 31 December 2007 (A/63/327/Add.1), the report of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/63/474), and the resolution of the General Assembly approving the recommendations and conclusions of the Board of Auditors (A/63/246);

2. *Welcomes* the unqualified opinion of the Board of Auditors on the UNICEF financial statements;

3. *Notes* that 14 recommendations of the Board of Auditors for the biennium ended 2005 are yet to be fully implemented;

4. *Takes note* of the 42 recommendations of the Board of Auditors for the biennium ended 31 December 2007 and, in this regard, takes note with appreciation the progress made by UNICEF in their implementation, and of the specific efforts made by management to improve transparency and to promote managerial accountability and ownership in dealing with audit recommendations;

5. *Requests* the Executive Director of UNICEF to build on progress achieved and to continue to implement the recommendations of the Board of Auditors in a timely way, and *requests* UNICEF to provide the Executive Board with a report at its second regular session of 2009 including an overview of the strategic implications of the recommendations for the management and strategy of UNICEF, as well as an update on the implementation of the main recommendations;

6. *Expresses concern* about the increase in total year-end unexpended funds for programme activities, partially with regard to regular resources, and *requests* UNICEF to provide the Executive Board with a report, including recommendations, at the second regular session of 2009 on efforts undertaken to address this issue, including on:

(a) The barriers at headquarters and country level to expending funds; and ways to expedite expenditures, taking into account good practices by other funds and programmes;

(b) Information on the profile of receipt of resources during the biennium 2006-2007;

7. *Further requests* UNICEF to include in the Annual Report of the Executive Director, on a biennial basis, a summary of financial results per biennium versus those originally budgeted for;

8. *Takes note* of the steps taken by UNICEF since 2003 to fund the end-of-service liabilities;

9. *Takes note with appreciation* the steps taken by the Executive Director to work with the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and other agencies to standardize their financial management in the context of the transition to International Public Sector Accounting Standards-based accounting, and *requests* to be informed on the progress of this work.

First regular session
6 February 2009

2009/5 Follow-up to General Assembly resolution 63/232 of 19 December 2008 on operational activities for development of the United Nations system: extension of the UNICEF medium-term strategic plan

The Executive Board,

Recalling its decision 2008/14 to extend the current medium-term strategic plan (MTSP) by two years, until the end of 2011,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 63/232 of 19 December 2008, changing the comprehensive policy review of operational activities from a triennial to a quadrennial cycle, urging the funds and programmes to align their strategic planning cycles with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system, and the intention to hold the next comprehensive policy review in 2012,

1. *Decides* to further extend the MTSP by two years, until the end of 2013;

2. *Requests* UNICEF to prepare its next strategic plan, to start in 2014, taking into account the recommendations of the next comprehensive policy review that will be held in 2012 and the end-of-cycle review of the current MTSP.

First regular session
6 February 2009

2009/6 Private Fundraising: 2009 work plan and proposed budget

A. Private Fundraising and Partnerships budgeted expenditures for the 2009 season

The Executive Board

1. *Approves* for the fiscal year 2009 (1 January to 31 December) budgeted expenditures of $121.9 million as detailed below and summarized in column II of table 7 to document E/ICEF/2009/AB/L.1:

	(In millions of United States dollars)
Commissions – field offices	1.5
Cost of goods delivered	30.7
Operating expenses – marketing	42.4
Operating expenses – support services	26.8
Investment funds	20.5
Total expenditures, consolidated	**121.9**

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF:

(a) To incur expenditures, as summarized in column II of table 7 to document E/ICEF/2009/AB/L.1, and to increase expenditures, up to the level indicated in column III of the same table, should the apparent proceeds from fundraising or card and gift sales increase to the levels indicated in column III; and accordingly, to reduce expenditures below the level indicated in column II, to the extent necessary, should the net proceeds decrease;

(b) To redeploy resources among the various budget lines (as detailed in paragraph 1 above), up to a maximum of 10 per cent of the amounts approved;

(c) To spend an additional amount between Executive Board sessions, when necessary, up to the amount caused by currency fluctuations, to implement the 2009 approved work plan.

B. Budgeted income for the 2009 season

The Executive Board

Notes that for the period 1 January to 31 December 2009, Private Fundraising and Partnerships net proceeds are budgeted at $471.3 million (regular resources), as shown in column II of table 7 in document E/ICEF/2009/AB/L.1.

C. Policy issues

The Executive Board

1. *Renews* investment funds, with $20.5 million established for 2009;

2. *Authorizes* UNICEF to incur expenditures in the 2009 fiscal period related to the cost of goods delivered (production and purchase of raw materials, cards and other products) for the 2009 fiscal year, up to $30.7 million, as indicated in the Private Fundraising and Partnerships medium-term plan (see table 6 of document E/ICEF/2009/AB/L.1);

3. *Approves* an interim one-month allocation for January 2010 in the amount of $12 million, to be absorbed in the annual PFP budget for 2010.

D. PFP medium-term plan

The Executive Board

Approves the Private Fundraising and Partnerships medium-term plan, as reflected in table 6 to document E/ICEF/2009/AB/L.1.

First regular session
6 February 2009

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